

Message Text

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ORIGIN OPIC-06

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 EB-07 COME-00 AGR-10 AID-05

TRSE-00 PRS-01 AS-01 /041 R

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EB/IFD/OIA:DHSTEBBING

NEA/AFN:LMURRAY

DESIRED DISTRIBUTION

OPIC/ID:CMIDDLETON; COMMERCE/BIC/CAGNE

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R 072156Z JAN 76

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY TUNIS

UNCLAS STATE 003722

E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: EFIN

SUBJECT: AGRIBUSINESS

REF: TUNIS 6421

FOR AMBASSADOR FROM MCCALLUM OF OPIC

1. FOLLOWING MCCALLUM LETTER TO AMBASSADOR DATED NOVEMBER 26 AND HIS AND LOGAN'S REPLIES OF DECEMBER 4, HERE IS PROPOSED TEXT OF ARTICLE FOR TOPICS, OPIC'S BIMONTHLY NEWS-LETTER. IT GOES TO A MAILING LIST OF 6,800 PLUS NUMEROUS OTHERS WHO ATTEND OPIC CONFERENCES OR WHOM OPIC OFFICERS ON AD HOC BASIS THINK MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN ONE OR MORE ITEMS.

2. BEGIN TEXT. IN A RECENT MEETING IN TUNISIA, EZZEDDINE CHELBI, CHEF DU CABINET OF THE TUNISIAN MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE
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CULTURE REITERATED HIS GOVERNMENT'S POLICY TO DEVELOP AGRICULTURE

BUSINESS IN TUNISIA WHEN HE TOLD PHILIP MCCALLUM, OPIC'S DEPUTY VICE PRESIDENT FOR FINANCE, THAT U.S. FOOD PROCESSING AND MARKETING FIRMS CAN BE ASSURED OF A SUPPLY OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS IN HIS COUNTRY.

MR. CHELBI ASSURED MR. MCCALLUM THAT WHETHER OR NOT TUNISIAN FARMERS CAN PROVIDE ADEQUATE PRODUCTION TO PRIVATE U.S. FOOD PROCESSORS, PACKERS OR MARKETERS, THE TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT, WHICH OWNS EXTENSIVE AGRICULTURAL LAND, WILL CONTRACT WITH THESE FIRMS DIRECTLY TO PROVIDE THEM WITH THE QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF PRODUCT NEEDED.

A JOINTLY OWNED FOOD PROCESSING OR MARKETING COMPANY OPERATING IN TUNISIA MAY BE MANAGED BY THE U.S. PARTNER, AND IF THE PRODUCT IS PRODUCED FOR EXPORT, THE U.S. PARTNER MAY HOLD A MAJORITY OF THE SHARES. THE TUNISIAN COMPANY, THROUGH ITS CONTRACT WITH THE GOVERNMENT, CAN SUPERVISE PRODUCTION ON GOVERNMENT-OWNED LANDS. TUNISIA'S POLICY, HOWEVER, DOES NOT PERMIT THE PURCHASE OR LEASE OF AGRICULTURAL OR PASTORAL LAND BY FOREIGN-OWNED ENTITIES.

MR. MCCALLUM SAID HE WAS PLEASED WITH THE RESULTS OF THE MEETING. "IT APPEARS THAT TUNISIA CONTAINS AN ABUNDANT SUPPLY OF ARABLE ACREAGE AND A VARIETY OF CLIMATIC AND SOIL CHARACTERISTICS CONDUCIVE TO EFFICIENT PRODUCTION. THIS, PLUS TUNISIA'S PROXIMITY TO MAJOR INTERNATIONAL MARKETS, MAKES IT AN ATTRACTIVE AREA FOR MANY NEW AGRIBUSINESS CO-VENTURE POSSIBILITIES." END TEXT.

3. OPIC HAS AVOIDED TECHNIQUE OF DIRECT QUOTE OF GOT

OFFICIAL, BUT THEY MAY INCLUDE ONE IF THEY WISH. OTHER TEXT ALTERATIONS WHICH THEY OR EMBASSY WISH TO SUGGEST ARE WELCOME, TOO. KISSINGER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AGRIBUSINESS, AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT, JOINT VENTURES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE003722
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: F GWILLIAMS
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760006-0215
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760178/aaaacrqz.tel
Line Count: 95
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN OPIC
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 TUNIS 6421
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: castelsl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <28 JUL 2004 by barnescd>; APPROVED <17 AUG 2004 by castelsl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AGRIBUSINESS
TAGS: EFIN, EINV, EAGR, TS, OPIC
To: TUNIS
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006